

WHAT'S IT WORTH?



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Scriptures Cited:

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TO GAIN THE WORLD

We will begin this lesson in the book of Matthew chapter 16, verses 24 through 26.

Matthew 16:24-26

²⁴ Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. ²⁵ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

²⁶ For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

I wanted to read that before we began the third lesson of this series where we are using the temptations of Christ in Matthew chapter 4 as our starting point. Before we get into the third temptation, I want us to briefly review a few points that we have covered in the first two lessons ([Stone, Word, Bread](#) and [Tempting God](#)). As we do, keep in mind what we just read in Matthew 16 verses 24 through 26: "...what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" We will see how this scripture plays into the theme of this lesson.

– A BRIEF REVIEW –

In our first lesson of this series, we began by looking at the first temptation that occurred after Jesus was baptized. The Spirit of God came upon Him and He was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. In this first temptation, by questioning what God had said, the devil tried to bring doubt into Jesus' mind, saying '*If thou be the Son of God, turn these stones into bread.*' By looking at Jesus' response, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word...' through the lens of scripture, we saw that there is a connection between the Stone, the Word, and the Bread. We also noted how the devil was trying to take advantage of His appetite, which is generally how the devil operates. He tries to get to us by using the things that we want or desire.

In the second lesson “Tempting God”, we focused more on the tactics used by the devil. After taking Jesus on a pinnacle of the temple, in verse 6 we see Satan saying: “*If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*”

Jesus replied to this with scripture, saying ‘It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God’. And just as in the first lesson, we went into Deuteronomy to see the places where ‘it is written’. We took special note of the fact that the devil actually came to Jesus quoting scripture – in particular, a scripture about the goodness of God (Psalm 91). This is one tactic that we really must be aware of.

We should always be on guard if someone attempts to use God’s Word or God’s goodness to lead us in a way that is against God’s will. As it says in the book of Jude, ‘using the grace of God as an excuse for lasciviousness’, or as it says in Romans, ‘because we’re under God’s grace and His goodness, should we go on sinning? God forbid.’

THE THIRD TEMPTATION

This leads us to the third temptation of Christ here in Matthew chapter 4, which starts in verse 8, and it reads:

Matthew 4:8-11

⁸ *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;* ⁹ *And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

¹⁰ *Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* ¹¹ *Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*

Here we see the third temptation. Basically, Satan showed Jesus the world, and said 'I can give you the whole world' - literally. 'I will give you the world, if you will just bow down and worship me.' And that is why we started this lesson in chapter 16, where it said 'What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his soul?' That is the theme I want us to keep in mind, and it is where we get the title "What's it Worth?"

You know, what is your soul worth? What is eternity worth? What in this world is worth you losing your soul over? Is there **anything** or **anybody** that you would give up your soul for? We will continue on here, primarily staying in the book of Matthew. Going to the 13th chapter, we will find the parable of the seed and the sower. And I want to highlight the third situation or third scenario that is presented here. It is also somewhat interesting that we are dealing with the third temptation and it happens to coincide with the third scenario in the parable of the seed and sower.

Hopefully we are all familiar with this parable which begins in verse 1 of chapter 13. When we get to verse 18, Jesus begins to give the explanation of this parable:

Matthew 13:18-22

¹⁸ Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

¹⁹ When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

Note: So that's the first scenario.

²⁰ But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; ²¹ Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

Note: That is the second scenario. And then in verse 22, we see the third, which is what we are going to focus on.

²² He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

There in that third situation, you can see the parallel to our theme here "What's it worth". Jesus lets us know that even though the seed of the Kingdom and the good news of what Jesus has done was received by this person into their heart - the cares of this world, or the desires of this world can prevent that seed from growing and becoming fruitful.

As it tried to grow, there was something else in the heart. There were thorns. And it says that those thorns are the cares of this world, the desires of riches. They are the things that can distract us from actually having God *first* in our lives. Again, our theme here is, “What is it worth?” What in this world is worth your soul? What in this world is worth distracting your focus from Jesus and from God? What is worth losing our home in Heaven, where we want to spend eternity?...

Staying here in the 13th chapter, we will look at a couple of other parables where Jesus is teaching about *what* this Kingdom is, which He had been preaching “is at hand”. And in verse 44, Jesus says:

Matthew 13:44

⁴⁴ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

So, what Jesus is saying here is that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure. And when someone finds it, when someone hears the good news of the kingdom – the wise man who really understands the value of that treasure, is willing to sell everything that he has in order to lay hold of that treasure. There is nothing that they would withhold in order to obtain that treasure. And then in verse 45 Jesus continues:

Matthew 13:45-46

⁴⁵ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:
⁴⁶ Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

Again, here we see that same principle – that the value of the Kingdom of Heaven and the salvation that has been brought to us by Jesus Christ, is such that when we find it we should be willing to sell everything to enter in.

We will now go to the 19th chapter of Matthew. To give some context, Jesus was again teaching, and was approached by someone asking a question. As we read we will see how the things Jesus answered apply to what we have been studying here - which is the deceitfulness of riches, the things in the world that can distract us... and how we should prioritize our relationship with Christ.

In Matthew chapter 19, beginning at verse 16, it reads:

Matthew 19:16-26

¹⁶ And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

¹⁷ And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

¹⁸ He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, ¹⁹ Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

²⁰ The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

²¹ Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. ²² But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

²³ Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. ²⁵ When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

²⁶ But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Here we see an example of a man coming up to Jesus and saying ‘What must I do to have eternal life?’ and Jesus begins to list the commandments – the Holy commandments given by God. And the man says ‘Well, I’ve done all those things.’ Jesus then says ‘Okay, one more thing... If you want to be perfect, go sell everything you have and give it to the poor.’

You know, often times you hear people say, “God knows my heart” and I think this is an example of just that. Jesus knows your heart. He knows what’s in your mind, He knows where your true motives and intentions are. By telling this man, ‘If you want to be perfect, go sell everything’ it exposed the “thorns” that were in his heart. Jesus knew that this man’s possessions had actually become like an idol to him. They held a higher place in his heart than God.

It is stunning when you really think about it. Here was God manifested in the flesh standing in front of this man. And Jesus says ‘Follow me’ - (God in the flesh), ‘Sell all that you have and follow me’. But because this man had so much ‘stuff’ - it hit him right in the heart and he went away sorrowful. Rather than literally following God, who was right there in front of him manifested in the flesh, he chose his possessions.

I have even heard it put this way: “the problem is not in having possessions, the problem is when your possessions *have you*.”

Jesus then told his disciples that it is difficult for a man who has a lot of possessions to enter into the kingdom. He says “a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.” And then He gives the conclusion of the whole matter - it is impossible for a rich man. “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

If God is first, then it is possible. It is not that a rich man *can't* get in, but his riches must not outweigh his love and dedication to God. This takes us right back to our theme of ‘What is it worth?’ What is your salvation worth? What is it worth to you to follow God?

FOLLOWERS OF GOD

We will now look at this from another angle. Leaving the book of Matthew, let's go to the book of Hebrews where it brings this point home in a very concrete and sobering way. Staying with the theme of ‘What is it worth? What is your soul worth? Is anything in this world worth losing your soul?

For context, this letter is obviously primarily written to Hebrew believers. And it is considered to be one of the greatest books about faith in the Bible. In chapter 11 we see the “Hall of Faith” which tells us of those who by faith followed God and accomplished many great things.

Continuing to chapter 12 we are encouraged to look to those examples in order to help us live by our faith in God. It also lets us know about the discipline that we receive from God as a part of choosing to follow Him. The book of Hebrews compares our life of faith to a journey towards a “promised land”. Yes, there will be some difficulties, and there may be some ‘correcting’ from the Lord as we walk with Him. And picking up in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 11, we read about this:

Hebrews 12:11-13

¹¹ Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. ¹² Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

¹³ And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Keeping in mind that as we follow Christ, we are on a journey. This world is not our home, we are just traveling through. We are on a pilgrimage to our *true* home and that is what we are reading about here. When it gets tough and you feel weak, strengthen yourself in the Lord and continue.

Think about this: in your own life, have you ever traveled to a far destination? There are a couple of different ways that you can approach the journey. Once you are on the road, if you are just determined to get where you are going, you might only stop for restroom breaks and that's it. On the other hand, there are *some people* who want to go sight-seeing along the way. They want to enjoy the scenery and stop at every attraction, looking for entertainment as they go... and yes, it is okay to enjoy this life that we have, especially the life we have in Christ. But we should still remember not to let ourselves get attached to the things that we see here in this world, as we are traveling to our *true destination* - our home with God. Continuing to verse 14:

Hebrews 12:14

¹⁴ Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

I think that is such an important verse, that we will read it again. It says “Follow **peace** with all men, and **holiness, without which, no man shall see the Lord**”. This tells us the importance of our walk, and how we need to live with each other and with God. And verse 15:

Hebrews 12:15-17

¹⁵ Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

Note: And verse 16 is where we want to pay attention...

¹⁶ Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. ¹⁷ For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Once again I ask you, “What is it worth?”

This is the opposite of all the examples listed in chapter 11, of those people who were able to overcome **by faith**. Here we have an example of someone, who because of their appetite for a bowl of meat - sold their birthright.

And if you think about it for the Christian who is “born again” (John 3:3-7) – they have obtained a birthright. They now have a right to a reward, a treasure. This scripture here is warning us to not be caught up by our appetites or any desires of this world, 'lest you be like Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright'. And then verse 17 is also very interesting where it says that, when it would have been time for him to receive his blessing, he was rejected. It says “for he found no place of repentance...”

Some people, I believe - have mistakenly taken that verse to mean that Esau didn't repent. But actually, Esau *did* repent; he wanted his birthright, he wished that he would not have sold it for that piece of meat. But the repentance that he sought - it was actually for his *father* to repent. He wanted his father to change his mind and give him the birthright which he felt should have still been his, even though he had already sold it.

And like it says here, 'carefully and with tears' Esau was begging for his birthright, but it was too late, it had already been given to his brother. And that to me is just a terrifying thought; that a momentary slip of giving into the desires and giving into the appetite, led him to a place where he could not find repentance from his father. His father basically said, 'The ruling is settled. You sold your birthright, you gave it up.'

Now the good thing for us, is that this was under the old system. For those of us who are *truly* in Christ, if we do slip up – we have an advocate with the Father, who makes intercession for us. If we have let things get in the way of our dedication to God, we can repent of our sins truly and from the heart. We have an avenue of forgiveness through Christ Jesus. For us, we have a better covenant, but this warning is letting us know that we should value our birthright. Remember – what is it worth to you? What in this world is worth you losing your birthright? Your salvation? Your soul? This warning about Esau is put here for a reason.

With that, we will go ahead and put a button on these lessons based around those three temptations. Like I said, 'What is it worth?' We saw the devil offering Jesus the world, 'I'll give you the whole world. Just bow down to me.' And from this, we can learn that there is *nothing* in this world worth losing your soul over. Absolutely nothing.

If you are someone who realizes that you haven't had your priorities in the proper order; maybe you have let things or people in this world take priority over your dedication to Christ... you can change that today by taking the first step of repenting and making the decision to put God first in your life. But repentance alone is not what puts you *in* Christ. Much like we saw with Esau, those who are outside of Christ will not find forgiveness.

According to the Bible, the remission and forgiveness of sins occurs after repentance when one is baptized by faith in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38). This forgiveness is only found **IN Christ**. And the way that we come into Christ is by *putting on Christ*, as shown throughout the New Testament. Paul also plainly speaks of this in Galatians 3:27 "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Similar to what we can learn from the "[Not-Quite Parable of the Tower](#)"... a person can approach that Tower and be in the shadow of it, comfortably thinking that they are safe. But only those who have gone *into* the Tower are actually going to be saved and will have the benefits of salvation.

So, what is it worth... *to be saved*? Whatever your spiritual need is today, feel free to [contact us](#) as we journey together towards our Home with God.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

¹⁷ Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

¹⁸ That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; ¹⁹ Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.